A Meta-Ethnographic Review of Catholic Faith and COVID-19

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I. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has been striking massive people creating gigantic and terrifying adversity around the world. At the time of this writing, the outbreak confirmed more than one hundred million cases (as of 10 February 2021) of coronavirus worldwide (with the United States of America hitting the highest number of cases comprising 27 million infected individuals). Tragically, more than two million people have died (WHO, 2021).

The Novel Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2). Its first outbreak reported to World Health Organization (WHO) was connected to Pneumonia cases at a wildlife market in Wuhan, China on December 31, 2020. COVID-19 struck the Chinese nation in few weeks before it invaded the world by storm. Coronavirus outbreak was declared by WHO as a pandemic on March 11, 2020. COVID-19 can be zoonotic that transfer from bats to humans. Scientists reported that COVID-19 may be circulating in bats from Japan, China, and Thailand (Briggs, 2020).

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease that multiplies through droplets of saliva or mucus when an infected person sneeze, cough, or talk. The virus can also spread via the consumption of fecal matter or aerosols. Sneezing could produce 40,000 droplets while coughing 3,000 droplets and talking 600 droplets. The virus can travel from three to six feet and infect from four to forty-eight hours depending on the environmental conditions. Distancing six feet away from others and washing hands for more than 20 seconds are good rules to protect yourself from COVID-19. The virus lives longer on surfaces-4 hours on coppers, 24 hours on cardboard, and 72 hours on plastic and stainless steel. Alcohol with at least 60% solution can kill the virus. COVID-19 like other coronavirus looks like a sphere with a corona or crown in a form of the spike protein. The spiky structure helps the coronavirus fasten the cells that it will invade. It invades the cells through the eyes, mouth, and nose until it finds compatible receptors-for SARS-COV-2, the lung and gut cells. Once inside, the RNA virus infected the cells and these infected cells create a copy of the virus. New copies were brought outside of the cells. Then, infect other host cells. The common diagnostic symptoms of the infected individual are fever (87.9%), dry cough (67.7%), fatigue (38.1%), phlegm production (33.4%), shortness of breath (18.6%), and joint and muscle pain (14.8%). COVID-19 constitutes a threat to people with an existing illness or health issues: Cardiovascular disease (10.5%), Diabetes (7.3%), chronic lung disease (6.3%), High blood pressure (6%), Cancer (5.6%), and 0.9% No condition. A swab test is done to diagnose the presence of coronavirus. To develop immunity to COVID-19, vaccines may contain “killed or weakened virus, viral proteins, or viral genetic material” (Eckert, 2020).

The COVID-19 vaccines that had made it to phase three and beyond were from Pfizer-BioNTech(US and Germany), Moderna(US), Gamaleya(Russia), Oxford-AstraZeneca (UK and Sweden), CanSino(China), Johnson & Johnson(US and Belgium), Vector Institute(Russia), Novavax (US), Sinopharm(China), Sinovac(China), Sinopharm-Wuhan(China), Bharat Biotech(India), CureVac(Germany), AnGes(Japan), Zydus Cadila(India), Anhui Zhifei Longcom and the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences(China), Medicago(Canada), Beijing Institute of Biological Products (China), Research Institute for Biological Safety Problems(Kazakhstan), Institute of Medical Biology at the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences(China), and Murdoch Children’s Research Institute (Australia)(Zimmer, 2020). A new threat to the public health authorities and efficacies of the vaccines after a year of the pandemic is the emergence of coronavirus Variants: B.1.1.7 (UK) 501Y.V2(South Africa), and P1(Brazil). The current vaccines are effective in preventing COVID-19 through their variants (Wei-Haas, 2020).

Due to the public health emergency worldwide in March 2020, the National Government moved to close places of worships, commercial centers, schools, and public places—any arena where people can gather on considerable size. Diocese throughout Rome and around the world canceled all public

masses, sacramental and Holy week celebrations to contain coronavirus (Mares, 2020). The Roman Catholic Church, the oldest and largest Christian church with 1.3 billion baptized members worldwide had used heuristic and innovative approaches to combat the unprecedented time of the pandemic. Last February 8, 2021, in the state-of-the-world address, Pope Francis presented a master plan at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome to overcome the pandemic and exposed its accompanying crises with the Vatican ambassadors, all maintaining health protocols representing 183 states that have diplomatic relations with the Holy See. He mentioned the following crises: a health crisis, an environmental crisis, an economic and social crisis, victims of isolation and closed borders, migrants and refugees, a crisis of politics, terrorism, and a crisis of relationships or what he termed 'perhaps the most serious of all: the crisis of human relationships'" (O'Connell, 2021).

The author conducted a systematic literature review to

(1) identify how the pandemic is altering the Roman Catholic Church landscape in developed and developing countries applying investigative lens at how parishes or diocese, catholic schools and seminary, catholic institutions, and individual members are responding to the social, political, and economic changes produced by COVID-19,

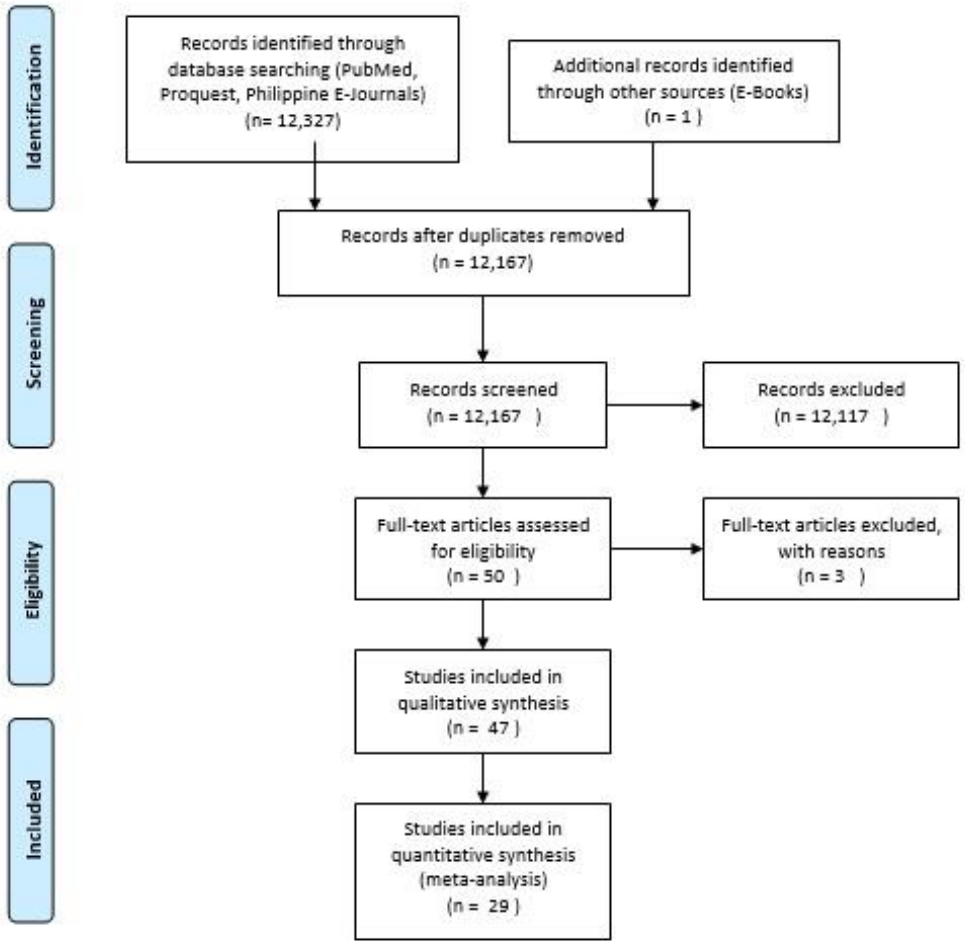
(2) identify the articles written by researchers or scholars about Catholic Faith and COVID-19, categorize them into analytical themes that include Epidemiology, Theodicy, Bioethics, Religious Rituals, Pastoral Mission, and Catholic Schools,

(3) synthesize the lessons learned from these approaches and develop an agenda for major themes that needs further research or discourse.

II.Methodology

The researcher conducted a systematic review using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis (PRISMA) guidelines (Moher et al, 2009). The PRISMA checklist has been provided as Supplementary Figure 1. Articles and credible websites relevant to Catholic faith and COVID-19 were identified and analyzed. The researcher chose to limit the search to articles published on or after December 2019, when the first case was identified in Wuhan, China leading to an ongoing pandemic. This allows for a review of one (1) year of literature, therefore presenting updated research investigating how religious or faith-based institutions, congregations, and individual persons were affected by the changes produced by COVID-19. The search included journal articles published starting December 2019 related to natural disasters and pandemics.

Figure 1 Stages of Systematic Literature Review Utilizing PRISMA Guidelines


Identification
Screening
Eligibility
Included
Records identified through database searching (PubMed, Proquest, Philippine E-Journals) (n= 12,327)
Additional records identified through other sources (E-Books) (n = 1)
Records after duplicates removed (n = 12,167)
Records screened (n = 12,167)
Records excluded (n = 12,117)
Full-text articles assessed for eligibility (n = 50)
Full-text articles excluded, with reasons (n = 3)
Studies included in qualitative synthesis (n = 47)
Studies included in quantitative synthesis (meta-analysis) (n = 29)

Search strategy

The researcher searched Proquest, PubMed, and Philippine e-Journals for articles with significant discussion of the faith, religion, and COVID-19. After a qualitative assessment of relevant keywords, we identified all pertinent articles based on the following terminology categories found in MeSH shown below table 1.

Table 1. MeSH Resources

Terms	Related words
COVID-19	SARS-CoV-2
Faith	Faith-Based Organizations, Parish Nursing, Religion and Medicine, Religious missions, Indonesia (Islamic faith), Catholicism
Religion	Religion and Science, Religion and Medicine, Freedom of religion

The initial search results of 12,328 articles underwent a title and abstract review followed by a full-text review. The researcher developed a priori inclusion criteria that includes the one (1) year timeframe mentioned above and selected articles with a vigorous discussion of the Catholic faith in the context of COVID-19. Any article deemed by the researcher to contain only a superficial mention of faith and COVID-19 and to not substantively (1) discuss Catholic religion and SARS-CoV-2 or (2) focus on research (3) in the context of Coronavirus was excluded from the final analysis. Faith or religion was defined broadly as “human beings’ relation to that which they regard as holy, sacred, absolute, spiritual, divine, or worthy of special reverence. It is also commonly regarded as consisting of the way people deal with ultimate concerns about their lives and their fate after death.” Participation in religious institutions of Roman Catholics, Islam, Evangelicals, and other faith-based institutions were constituent

elements of religious life. The literature reviews discussed quantitative and qualitative data, and investigated the emerging themes on how the pandemic change the landscape of the Catholic tradition. The researcher selected the final list of journal articles based on the inclusion criteria

Analytical methods

The researcher used the modified meta-ethnographic approach to identify the lessons from original concepts and ideas, synthesize the ideas leading to common themes, and narrow them down to major themes. The meta-ethnographic approach has been utilized for systematic literature review of health literary works due to its inductive method providing a higher level of critical analysis producing new queries for further research and discussion. The researcher conducted three steps of analysis: (1) Identifying original concepts and ideas from each journal article; (2) synthesizing these ideas into common themes; and (3) narrowing it down to major themes. These steps are outlined in Table 2. Original concepts and ideas were topics discussed in each journal article, which the researcher felt had some relevance to this paper's focus on the Catholic church and COVID-19. Common themes were key concepts that were synthesized in at least two different articles. The researcher assessed how the common themes may fall into broader overarching ideas through synthesis and coded these into related non-mutually exclusive groups we termed major themes. The synthesis process of mining out these major themes was one of reciprocal translation and constant comparison of concepts across studies. The process elucidated tensions and areas for future research within each major theme, as shown in Table 2. Any disagreements on the analysis were resolved with discussion and consensus. This research, based on previously published literature, did not meet the criteria for Institutional Review Board approval

Table 1 List of Included Journal Articles

Article Number & Title	Author	Year	Country
1.The coronavirus disease-2019 pandemic, social distancing, and observance of religious holidays: Perspectives from Catholicism, Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism	Miller et al.	2020	United States
2. COVID-19, Virtual Church Services and a New Temporary Geography of Home	Bryson et al.	2020	United Kingdom
3. Correspondence churchinaction: The role of religious interventions in times of COVID-19	Del Castillo et al.	2020	United Kingdom
4. Should the Holy Week 2020 be cancelled in Latin America due to the COVID-19 pandemic?	Rodriguez-Morales et al	2020	United States
5. Mobilizing the field hospital: Pastoral care as a paradigm for ministry with young adults	Jarzembowski	2020	United States
6.Life and Churchlife During Pandemic: Bioethical Issues and Church Response in the Time of COVID-19	Elivera¨	2020	Philippines
7.Rituals in the Time of COVID-19: Imagination, Responsiveness, and the Human Spirit	Imber-Black	2020	United States
8.Spirituality, religiosity and the mental health consequences of social isolation during Covid-19 pandemic	Lucchetti et al.	2020	Brazil
9.New Zealand Religious Community Responses to COVID-19 While Under Level 4 Lockdown	Oxholm et al.	2020	United States
10.COVID-19: spiritual interventions for the living and the dead	Corpuz	2020	United Kingdom
11.Religions in action: the role of interreligious dialogue in the COVID-19 pandemic	Corpuz	2020	United Kingdom
12. COVID-19 Crisis, Impacts on Catholic Schools, and Potential Responses | Part 1: Developed Countries with Focus on the United States	Wodon et al	2020	United States
13. COVID-19 Crisis, Impacts on Catholic Schools, and Potential Responses | Part II: Developing Countries with Focus on Sub-Saharan Africa	Wodon et al	2020	United States
14. Theodicy, undeserved suffering, and compassionate solidarity: An interdisciplinary reading of hwang sok-yong's the guest	Kim	2020	Switzerland

15. Religious Coping of Selected Filipino Catholic Youth	Del Castillo rt al.	2020	Switzerland
16. COVID-19, mental health and religion: an agenda for future research	Dein et al.	2020	United Kingdom
17. Catholic School Educators as Adaptive Leaders: A Structure for Prophetic Action in Response to COVID-19	James	2020	United States
18.Religion and the transmission of COVID-19 in The Netherlands	Vermeer et al	2020	Switzerland
19. Religion in the Age of Social Distancing: How COVID-19 Presents New Directions for Research	Baker et al	2020	United States
20. Validation of the Interreligious Forms of the Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRSi-7, CRSi-14, and CRSi-20): Salience of Religion among Selected Youth in the Philippines	Del Castillo et al	2020	Switzerland
21.Poverty and the COVID-19 pandemic: A challenge to the church	van der Merwe	2020	South Africa
22.The COVID-19 Pandemic's Impact on Religiosity in Poland	Boguszewski et al	2020	Switzerland
23. Culture Wars and COVID-19 Conduct: Christian Nationalism, Religiosity, and Americans' Behavior During the Coronavirus Pandemic	Perry et al.	2020	United kIngdom
24. Religion and Science in a Time of COVID-19: Allies or Adversaries?	Barmania et al	2020	Netherlands
25. COVID-19 and Religious Ethics (IDEOLOGY)	Alimi et al	2020	United Kingdom
26. Reflections on the characters of Dr Rieux and Fr Paneloux in Camus' The Plague in a consideration of human suffering during the COVID-19 pandemic (IDEOLOGY)	Bentley	2020	South Africa
27. SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) superspreader events	Majra et al	2020	United Kingdom
28. Covid-19: US Catholics split after bishops' conference recommends against Johnson and Johnson vaccine	Dyer	2020	United Kingdom
29. COVID-19 demands theological reflection: Buddhist, muslim, and christian perspectives on the present pandemic	Xiong et al	2020	Canada

Table 2 Summary of modified Meta-ethnographic Analysis	
1. Major Theme	**Epidemiological**
Original Concepts and Ideas taken from Journal Articles and Article Numbers	Common Themes
religious gatherings as Super Spreader Events (27) Eucharist as spreader of Virus (9) Catholic Mass performed at the opening of the Carnival as SSE (18)	Super spreader Events (SSE)
Pope Francis and the Catholic leaders established guidelines for in person or virtual religious gatherings in accordance with the policies of health authorities (1, 6) Proposal and cancellation of Sunday obligation, weddings, baptisms, pilgrimage and activities during Holy Week (1,4,6)	Virus Mitigation
Challenges & Further Research: To further study religious beliefs, practices, and identities that relates to social distancing, disease mitigation behaviors, and medical behaviors (19)	
2. Major Theme	**Theodicy**
Original concepts and Ideas taken from Journal Articles	Common Themes
Social Scientists perceived religion as coping mechanism amidst human suffering and death. (22)	Social Sciences
Spiritualization of the Virus perceiving it as a warning or punishment of God or proclamation of spiritual victory—an extreme response to COVID-19 (26)	Religious or Secular Gnosticism
Pursuing science in dealing with COVID-19 excluding theological perspectives-another extreme response to COVID-19 (24,26)	(Religious or Secular certainty)

He(Fr Paneloux) berated the inability of science to overturn God's judgment. (26) As COVID-19 cases increases and crisis expands, Like Fr Paneloux, many are consulting the Bible for answers and sharing it in social media. (26) The American response was politicalized by allegiance to Catholic Trump's Christian Nationalism (23). In the Novel, Dr Rieux focuses on the epidemic and how to control it. (26) Albert Camus suggested "that the question of theodicy could be reimagined from the notion of the absurdity of life". (26) The adversities of Job shall not be interpreted as a judgement from God or redemptive action. (26) "Christ is the revelation of God's selfless, participatory love" (26)	Activism Participatory Love
Challenges & Further Research: to discuss further existential insecurity in relation to religiosity, applications of theodicy, and conspiracy theories about the pandemic. (19)	
3. Major Theme	**Bioethics**
Original concepts and Ideas taken from Journal Articles and Article Numbers	Common Themes
through various protocols allow physician to unilaterally assign DNR order (6) ethics of the practice would depend upon the procurement of informed consent of the patient (6) "to advise against the use of unproven drug, much less injurious or fatal". The clinical tests must be ethical. (6) some protocols can be bypassed as long as we do not compromise the welfare of the COVID-19 patient. (6) using COVID-19 vaccines that used aborted cells have been morally acceptable (28) moral legitimacy of vaccination (28)	Do-not-resuscitate (DNR) orders Vaccine Development Tissues of Aborted Fetuses
Challenges & Further Research: to research further about bioethics, ideology, and development of policies. (19)	
4. Major Theme	**Religious Rituals**
Original concepts and Ideas taken from Journal Articles and Article numbers	Common Themes
Rituals for connection and meaning-making (7) provided the public with "online-based Church masses, community prayers, spiritual recollections and retreats and eucharistic adoration and processions" (2, 3). Some churches were open for individual prayer (1). the Pope established directives through the Vatican Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of the Pope on how to celebrate the Holy week (1,6). Some bishops suspended the custom of abstaining meat on Fridays during Lent. (16) In New Zealand, recorded Masses accessing through the websites and TV. (9) Some dioceses cancelled or prohibited priests from performing sacraments while other dioceses allowed it in accordance to Health authorities (1). In Poland, drive thru confessions were conducted (29).	General Religious rituals Holy Week Sunday Masses Sacraments

In Italy, allowed the group of Doctors attending COVID-19 patients to distribute communion, and read prayers on their bedside (6).	
Challenges & Further Research: further research on privatization of religiosity and secularization, asynchronous religious rituals, technologically mediated religious innovation and distribution and civil engagement(19)	
5. Major Theme	**Pastoral Mission**
Original concepts and Ideas taken from Journal Articles and Article Numbers	Common Themes
"Field Hospital" approach in pastoral care (5). love of neighbor through the story of the Good Samaritan (25) In the US, Pastoral care covers "missionary endeavors, counseling, formation, support groups, ecological protection, and social justice (5). In South Africa, the response of the church to poverty is based from the meaning of Church (21) double calling as being "called and sent." (25) Karl Barth identified this "action of God as the Missio Dei (21). Church as a "body of Christ" (25) exhortations on shared vulnerability. (25) Pope Francis speaks of "the globalization of indifference (14).	Pastoral Theology
used of online surveys, Brief Rcope, and CRSi to assess religion/spirituality and coping mechanisms (8,15,20,22)	Pastoral Methods
provided online based masses, spiritual retreats and recollections, counseling and pastoral guidance guiding brethren to find meaning and acceptance, refuge, hope and rejuvenation. (15) provided personal protective equipment (PPE), facemasks to health workers, face shields, feeding programs to the poor, and opened the doors to the homeless. (15) initiated mobile market, food packs to the indigenous groups, free rides, and providing shelter to stranded local tourists (6). The church provides spiritual assistance both to the dead and the bereaved family members. (10)	Pastoral Care & Counseling
Challenges & Further Research: to further research on virtual qualitative methods, shifted theoretical focus on lived religion, and civic action through catholic organizations and institutions (19)	
6. Major Theme	**CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**
Original concepts and Ideas taken from Journal Articles and Article Numbers	Common Themes
a prophetic response maximizing "adaptive leadership" framework in Catholic Education leadership(17) projecting ourselves to be a savior or expecting other leaders for a messianic performance is a form of idolatry. (17) Prophetic action means having a legitimate degree of well-being (17) There are five important behaviors in adaptive leadership (17)	Pastoral Care & Leadership
In the United States, to address loss in learning, distance learning offers opportunities but not all school networks are ready. (12)	Teaching Methods

There are risks also for underprivileged students to be left behind. Remedial education can be implemented. (12) In transitioning to distance learning there are wide resources. (12) Internet had been used much compared to other media in developed countries (12) In Africa, similar concern with the United States but more severe. (13) To scale up distance learning, resources has been provided. (13) Due to internet access limitations in Africa, 45.5% used radio, 18.2% used TV, and 45.5% used mobile phone (13)	
Challenges & Further Research: to research further on adaptive leadership model, distance learning approaches, changes to professional roles, fund raising strategies, and government assistance on non-profit institutions (19)	

III.Results and Discussion

Twenty-Nine (29) of the Journal Articles from 12,328 unique articles resulting from the search terms matched the inclusion criteria (Table 1: List of Included Articles). The articles took the shape of five non-mutually exclusive categories of analysis: 26 were expert statements, 2 contained original research and 1 literature review. All the included journal articles were published in English and in 2020. Of the 29 articles included for final analysis, 9 were from the United States, nine from the United Kingdom, five from Switzerland, two from South Africa, and one each from the Philippines, Canada, Brazil, and the Netherlands.

Thematic analysis

The phases of analysis are presented in Table 2. The first phase analysis of the journal articles revealed original ideas, concepts, and issues within the context of the Catholic faith and COVID-19. In the second phase of the analysis, qualitative review of the reports identified and synthesized common themes between the articles and narrow them down to 6 major themes that contained these concepts and ideas. These major themes in ascending order of prevalence were bioethics (3 articles, 10.34%); Catholic Schools (4 articles, 13.79%); Theodicy (6 articles, 20.69%); Epidemiological (7 articles, 24.13%); Religious Rituals (9 articles, 31.03%); and Pastoral Mission (11 articles, 37.93%).

EPIDEMIOLOGY

Epidemiology is a field of study that looks at how communities, not an individual spread the coronavirus (COVID-19) or mitigate it. It studied the cause of the pandemic and associated factors to be used for preventing and controlling COVID-19. To characterize the virus outbreak in the Catholic church, it measures the number of new cases over a set of periods of time, the total number of existing cases, and the frequency of death (National Geographic Society, 2019).

Superspreader

Religion as a vector of COVID-19 transmission or mitigation was one of the major themes in analyzing the pandemic. Multiple reports had been documented how religious gatherings identified as important venues of virus transmission in South Korea, Germany, the USA, the Netherlands, Singapore, Hongkong, and India.

The most notable SSE was the religious gathering at the Shincheonji Church of Jesus with 'Patient 31' in Daegu, South Korea confirmed on February 18, 2020. The 4482 confirmed cases of

COVID-19 were linked to her church attendance. Another SSE event was a catholic pilgrimage tour that produced 49 cases last March 8, 2020, after Israel's visits between February 8, 2020, to February 16, 2020 (Majra et al, 2020).

In New Zealand, the sharing of the communion of several attendees on a Catholic Mass at St Mary Church conducted by Father Murphy was linked to one of first New Zealand confirmed COVID-19 cases (Oxholm et al, 2020).

In the Netherlands, a mass gathering in a carnival took place on February 22-25, 2020 before the first outbreak. Catholicism has a strong association with the carnival. In the 1960s carnival was highly known among the Southern Catholic Dutches in the provinces of Brabant and Limburg and endorsed by the clergy. Catholic Mass is performed at the opening of the Carnival (Vermeer et al, 2020).

Disease Mitigation

The Catholic Church has an old practice for revising religious rituals amidst a contagious outbreak. In 1918, Bishop John Patrick Farrelly of the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland sent a letter to all priests to follow every guideline or policy set by the “Board of Health and Aid” to contain the Spanish Influenza pandemic. Priests were allowed to observe mass at homes, published “hymns and Bible readings” in the newspapers (Miller et al., 2020). The Catholic Foreign Missionaries in the 1910s wore “protective clothing, including gloves, face masks, and often headgear” (National Geographic Society, 2019).

Due to the worldwide social distancing decrees on March 2020, Pope Francis established guidelines on celebrating Holy Week in line with public health policies set by the government. He joined the faithful through multimedia-television, radio, and the internet. Sunday Masses were conducted virtually in accordance with local health instructions. Bishops worldwide canceled their Sunday obligation. Some dioceses prohibited their priests to administer sacraments- hearing confessions and anointing of the sick. If ever performed, it shall be in conformity to “Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations and local directives,” and with health care assistants (Miller et al, 2020).

After acquiring more than 1,900 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Brazil on March 21, 2020, researchers in Catholic Latin America made a proposal to voluntary cancel travels and activities during Holy Week that will start on April 5, 2020. In addition to that, "handwashing and respiratory hygiene" and "restrictions on performing Holy Weeks face-to-face" must be part of the religious ritual and mandatory sanctioned by public health officials and religious authorities. The liturgical celebration, activities, and processions during Holy Week attract gigantic crowds in Catholic Countries- not just in Latin America but also in the Caribbean, Italy, Spain, the Philippines, and the rest. The case in Latin America is complicated due to other existing infectious diseases in the case as measles and dengue (Rodriguez-Morales, 2020).

Sacramental Celebrations such as weddings and baptisms in the Philippines were canceled but not funeral rituals. The corpse of the COVID-19 victims is not contagious according to the WHO. But for precautionary measures, “relatives are not to touch nor to kiss the body of the victims as a precaution to prevent the transmission”. There are only two left “unacceptable practices” on funeral rites: “a cremation or a mass burial in a mass grave”. To die poor in the Philippines in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic is “not only sad but cruel”. Several unclaimed dead bodies piled up along the hallway of the East Avenue Medical Center in Quezon City due to insufficient freezers, the hesitancy of the family and relatives to claim for fear of virus transmission, and the financial charges when they "claim the cadaver."(Eliverä , 2020)

After lockdown in Quezon City, Philippines, the 65th Anniversary in Parish of the Holy Sacrifice at the University of the Philippines was celebrated to commemorate the completion and blessing of the UP Diliman Chapel in cooperation “with Barangay UP Campus and UP Diliman, the Parish Pastoral Council” to assure “the safety of all those who will physically attend the celebration” (BMPlus, 2020).

The researcher attends mass three to seven times a week to pray for the safety of his Philippine Army family member and relatives. Before he entered the church, the staff will ask him to fill out a

contact tracing form and check the body temperature. Each attendee is required to wear a mask and face shield.

To control the spread of the virus, there is a need to further study religious beliefs, practices, and identities that relate to social distancing, disease mitigation behaviors, and medical behaviors (Baker et al, 2020).

THEODICY

Theodicy is a “vindication of God’s goodness and justice” (Dein, 2013) in the midst of Coronavirus. Natural disasters, suffering, pain, and sickness could make us question God or even assume that God creates evil in this world. We might ask, “If God is truly loving and all-powerful, how could he allow COVID-19 to increase and cause thousands of people to suffer and die that include the vulnerable and the innocents?”

The term “theodicy” was introduced to philosophy by the German Mathematician and Philosopher by Gottfried Leibniz in 1710 when he published his work entitled, “Essais de Théodicée sur la bonte de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal (Essays of Theodicy on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil), shortened as Théodicée.

Before I present the perspectives on theodicy, let us look at the secular perspectives of religion.

Social Science

Classical sociologists’ theorists such as Marx, Weber, and Durkheim had similar concepts on religion or theodicy-an instrument to give knowledge and sense of purpose amidst human suffering and evil, ability to cope with adversities and establish social order. But Karl Marx considered religion as an "irrational ideology creating false consciousness". Sociology theories overlapped psychological theories. Freud viewed religion as a source of strength of an individual battling against uncontrollable and unforeseen events. Allport believed that it provides answers to questions about human suffering, pestilence, and death. Social scientists show the importance of theodicy in dealing with the current crises (Boguszewski et al, 2020).

Theological Responses

The theological responses to this global outbreak, suffering, and death have been varied. At one end of the continuum, the spiritualization of the virus associates it with the "warning signs" of the biblical prophets and punishment of God or proclamation of spiritual victory, for example, forming Christian Nationalism as an emerging religious ideology. At the end of another continuum, theology involves science.

Bentley (2020) reviewed and considered two pieces of literature that deal with human suffering: the novel The Plague by Albert Camus, and the Bible. He argues that Christian responses to the COVID-19 outbreak are similar to the perspectives hold by Dr Rieux, Fr Paneloux, and Job. He presented three perspectives on his reflections: (1) a view that questions God "in the light of the suffering of the innocent," (2) a view that subjects itself to "a state of surrender to ‘the God who knows best," and (3) a view that reimagines "from the notion of the absurdity of life". These viewpoints can "draw people closer to God in search of protection or causes them to give up on God altogether".

The Plague was published in 1947 by French Philosopher and journalist Albert Camus as a reflection of the German occupation of France during World War 2. He used allegory and paralleled the Nazi forces to the “plague-carrying rats dying on the streets of Oran and bringing the dreaded disease to the local population(Bentley, 2020).

First Problematic Response: Gnosticism

In the Plague, Fr Paneloux started his sermons: “Calamity has come on you, my brethren, and, my brethren, you deserved it.” The priest compared the plagues to 10 plagues of Egypt in the Old Testament sent by God to rescue Israelites from the oppression of slavery for 400 years. He believes that plagues were not God’s will but a consequence of human evil action. He berated the inability of science to overturn God’s judgment. He presented the plagues as a warning and punishment of God as the result of sins.

As COVID-19 cases increases and crisis expands, Like Fr Paneloux, many are consulting the Bible for answers and sharing it on social media. The common theme was signs of the times (Matthew 24:7), absence of rain, and plagues (2 Chronicles 7:13). COVID-19 was presented as a sign of anger or warning from a punisher God who is calling the world for humble repentance.

Religious certainty is an extreme and bipolar response by interpreting the virus as God’s justice or election. We cannot underestimate this problematic response. There were popular faith leaders who made these pronouncements quoting the scriptures. Pastor Kenneth Copeland used Galatians 3:13 to ‘execute judgment over COVID-19’, linking it to the work of Satan. Some Pentecostal movements considered COVID-19 as a curse quoting Leviticus 26:14–16, Deuteronomy 28:15 and 22, and Isaiah 26:20–21. They believe that they could remove the curse or punishment by claiming victory through faith alone. They ignored physical distancing, wearing a mask, and sanitizing the hands holding on to faith as protection from the virus (Bentley, 2020). The American response was politicalized by allegiance to Catholic Trump’s Christian Nationalism-- an ideology “that disregards scientific expertise; a conception of Americans as God's chosen and protected people; [and]distrust for news media” (Perry, 2020). This is the far-right religious wing. In Poland, a Catholic clergyman admitted that “defeatist positions and surrender to the course of events may occur.” Namely, the pandemic ‘can be considered a punishment for sins(Sulkowski et al, 2020).”

Extreme religious ideology resulted from taking Bible verses out of context ignoring the historical, cultural, and narrative background, and aggressively threw it to the bleeding world.

Bentley (2020) evaluated the responses from the novel and Bible and presented two presuppositions:

First presuppositions: history can be evaluated within a scope of a biblical timeline. Life starts at the Book of Genesis and ends with the Book of Revelation. From the literalist view, every experience the people have now is between these two timelines-along with the “metaphorical three-tiered universe, composed of heaven, hell, and earth”. Every part of life needs to be interpreted spiritually for example, by relating the pandemic to the plagues of Egypt without looking at the context to make sense of the current event. All good comes from God. Everything that is painful comes from God as an act of warning or punishment or from the Devil who wants to steal abundant life. Black and white perception without considering the natural phenomenon.

Second presupposition: Life experience as a result of sin or a form of salvation “interpreting life within the tension of the sin and redemption narrative of Scripture.” Bentley (2020) presented the problematic response through a story found in the Book of Job. The Book of Job questions: “Why bad things happen to good people.” Job’s wife and his friends have a similar standpoint with Fr Paneloux arguing that Job suffers as a result of sins or disciplinary action to get him back on track.

Gnosticism in a post-modern world is a religious certainty that "absolutize the theories" learned by teachers or scholars of faith and "force others to submit to their way of thinking...intolerant of open inquiry...reducing Jesus’ teaching to 'a cold and harsh logic that seeks to dominate everything'". They are using their religious position to promote their own theories or ideas yearning for "'a monolithic body of doctrine guarded by all and leaving no room for nuance' replacing the simplicity of the Gospel”(O’Connell , 2021).

Second Problematic Response: Activism

In the Novel, Dr. Rieux focuses on the epidemic and how to control it. He did not take seriously the sermons of Fr Paneloux. He does not believe in God but “treats the ill with compassion, instituting protocols that may inconvenience society, but are for their own good.”

Pope Francis said that the pastoral mission and work, without Christ, are just social activism. He said, “Let us not forget that the condition of every mission in the Church is that we are united to the Risen Christ as branches to the vine”(Catholic World Report, 2018).

Best Response: Lamentations and Participatory Love

A natural disaster such as typhoons, climate change, tsunamis, earthquakes, etcetera was caused by earth movements. COVID-19 was caused by a natural process, transmitting from bats to humans through an intermediate host. Nature does not have the ability to recognize disasters or catastrophes. If a glass falls from the table and got broken, do you get angry? No. You just adjust and accept because of the law of gravity (Breboneria, 2020).

Albert Camus suggested, “that the question of theodicy could be reimagined from the notion of the absurdity of life”. Illness, poverty, affliction, and suffering have no metaphysical origin and are experienced existentially and randomly. The question is not “who” but “why.” “Why” is an open ended-question that “gives voice ‘through a humble use of reason’ to an existential crisis in the face of an enormous situation.” Why do bad things to good people? New Testament Scholar NT Wright stated, “Lament is what happens when people ask ‘Why?’ and don’t get an answer”(Bentley, 2020).

The adversities of Job shall not be interpreted as a judgment from God or redemptive action. He has done nothing to deserve the physical pain and horrible disease. He had mourned for his misery and protested to God. He had seen how the wicked prosper. In spite of personal disasters and unanswered queries, he realized, “the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding” (Job 28:28).

God created humans with the possibility to do evil because of free will. Humans chose to do evil, as a result, suffering, and death in this world. Without free will, humans won’t exist. But sin is not always the cause of adversities. The Lord is fully aware of our difficulties. He knows where we are coming from. He responded to suffering through Incarnation—He immersed himself in it until he died. He asked the Father, “Why have you forsaken me?” Despite pain and sorrow, he submitted to God’s will. He was humble and silent. Real faith, love, and perseverance can only be tested if we are facing a crisis and handling unlovable people around us. Of course, we do not plan for hardship. God is neither sadist nor masochist. The death of Christ was the consequence of the Lord’s choice to live in this sinful world. But God can turn bad things into good. Catholic Philosophy expert and author Dr. Peter Kreeft of Boston College stated, “The death of God himself on the cross. At the time, nobody saw how anything good could ever result from this tragedy. And yet God foresaw that the result would be the opening of heaven to human beings. So the worst tragedy in history brought about the most glorious event in history. And if it happened there-if the ultimate evil can result in the ultimate good-it can happen elsewhere, even in our own individual lives. Here, God lifts the curtain and lets us see it. Elsewhere he simply says, ‘Trust me’”(Breboneria, 2020)

Lamentation is not enough. Thomas Oord (2019), the author of the book entitled “theodicy entitled, God, can’t: How to believe in God and love after the tragedy, abuse, and other evils” argues “that whilst Christians lament, we should also try to identify what God is doing in response to suffering. God’s response is love… Christ is the revelation of God’s selfless, participatory love, but also calls His followers to participate with God in creation in works of compassion, love, and care. These are practical expressions of God’s work in creation, which is not divorced from science, knowledge or human participation, but in which all of these are infused (Bentley, 2020)”.

Theodicy shall study further the meaning of lamentations, comfort, and participatory love that alleviate suffering. The book of Job presented consolation that worsens the circumstances instead of experiencing comfort.

To help alleviate human suffering, there is a need to discuss further existential insecurity in relation to religiosity, applications of theodicy, and conspiracy theories about the pandemic (Baker et al, 2020).

BIOETHICS

The U.S. National Catholic Bioethics Center defines Bioethics as “the study of the ethical concerns arising from the advances in biology and medicine. Its task involves distinguishing between morally appropriate and inappropriate uses of biotechnology and medicine. Bioethics pioneer Paul Ramsey once noted that for a man of serious conscience, ‘there may be some things that men should never do. The good things that men do can be made complete only by the things they refuse to do(The National Catholic Bioethics Center, 2021).’”

DNR Orders

Do-not-resuscitate (DNR) orders are the patient’s request directing the medical team to “withhold cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) in the event of cardiac arrest”. Under normal circumstances, only the patient can add this order to his/her medical chart. COVID-19 through various protocols allows the physician to unilaterally assign this order to critically ill patients due to “the shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) and exposure to fluids that could endanger the health and lives of the doctors, nurses, and others involved in the resuscitation. Concerns include not only losing healthcare personnel who could become ill but also the amount of PPE needed for each attempt.” Elivera (2020) stated that the ethics of the practice would depend upon the procurement of informed consent of the patient if incapacitated, immediate family member, relatives, or power of attorney. The advanced directive shall be obtained “as to unburden everybody of the so-called ‘guilt’ and from further distress of finger-pointing”. Unilateral DNR orders will only be problematic if there were no communication within the involved parties. Nevertheless, if there are no opportunities for communication, physicians shall place DNR orders in accordance with public health protocols “when the clinical facts offer no reasonable expectation of recovery from resuscitation (National Catholic Bioethics Center, 2021)”.

Performing Ritual to the Dead

Elivera (2020) stated that dying with loved ones in the time of pandemic is negligent if not a crime. WHO declared that the COVID-19 corpse is generally not infectious. But health authorities still advise relatives not to touch or kiss the dead bodies to prevent transmission of the virus. Funeral rites were left with two options: “. a cremation or a mass burial in a mass grave.”

Developing Vaccines and Medicines

Elivera (2020) stated that the earliest time we can produce a vaccine is between 12-18 months. Given the urgent needs, multiple pharmacological interventions have been already in experimental use from food to drugs such as banana, ginger, and virgin coconut oil (Eliverä , 2020) to drugs available in the market used to treat specific diseases: chloroquine (Malaria), hydroxychloroquine(rheumatoid arthritis and lupus), remdesivir(Ebola), lopinavir and ritonavir(HIV), and favipiravir(flu and many RNA viruses)(National Catholic Bioethics Center, 2021). This food and medicines still need to be tested. Elivera (2020) stated that “it is the moral duty of every medical practitioner to advise against the use of the unproven drug, much less injurious or fatal”. The clinical tests must be ethical. There was some discussion to cut bureaucracy in order to expedite the production of medicines or vaccines. The purpose of protocols in clinical experimentation is to protect human subject. However, in the face of global health needs, some protocols can be bypassed as long as we do not compromise the welfare of the COVID-19 patient. Ethical practice does not end in clinical trials but also the moral responsibility of the pharmaceutical companies. Vaccines and medicine shall be affordable also. Catholics must weigh and be informed about ethical considerations in getting vaccinated through rhetoric persuasion.

Tissues of aborted on Vaccines

The Vatican declared that using COVID-19 vaccines that used aborted cells have been morally acceptable as long as there were no alternatives or "in the absence of safe vaccines made from other sources"(National Post Online, 2021; Dyer, 2020). There were at least five of the COVID-19 vaccines that have been approved for human trials that "use one of two human fetal cell lines: HEK-293, a kidney cell line widely used in research and industry that comes from a fetus aborted in about 1972; and PER.C6, a proprietary cell line owned by Janssen, a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson, developed from retinal cells from an 18-week-old fetus aborted in 1985"(America Magazine, 2021). The Vatican through the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith granted the moral legitimacy based from the principle of "differing degrees of responsibility of cooperation in evil." In the face of a grave outbreak, such vaccines "can be used in good conscience with the certain knowledge that does not constitute formal cooperation with the abortion from which the cells used in the production of the vaccines derive." "(National Post Online, 2021, Dyer 2020). the Vatican also noted that while various vaccines might be disseminated in a country, "health authorities do not allow citizens to choose the vaccine with which to be inoculated." On the other hand, the Vatican and bishops worldwide have been exhorting government and scientists to develop vaccines that have no correlation to abortion."(America Magazine, 2021).

To ensure ethical practices, there is a need to research further about bioethics, ideology, and development of policies (Baker et al, 2020).

RELIGIOUS RITUALS

Rituals are more than a routine. It printed indelible memories in us from birth to death- From baptism or dedication to birthday parties, holidays, family reunions, First Holy Communion, Prom, graduations, House blessings, weddings, anniversaries, funerals, and memorials. Rituals provide us a stable resource for connection and meaning-making (Imber-Black, 2020). Religious rituals bent but did not break during COVID-19. The pandemic had challenged the catholic church to find new ways to conduct liturgical celebrations, religious rituals, and holidays to accompany the faithful.

Easter Triduum

Due to worldwide social distancing orders on March 2020, the Pope established directives through the Vatican Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of the Pope on how "to celebrate Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil, and Easter Sunday in line with these government guidelines" (Miller, 2020). Millions of people without the physical presence of the faithful will join the Pope through multi-media: radio, television, and the internet. The Crucifix of St. Marcellus and the Salus Populi Romani icon will be present during all the liturgical celebrations or the Easter Triduum, "the three days in which the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus are commemorated" (Vatican News, 2019).

Some bishops suspended the custom of abstaining from meat on Fridays during Lent(Dein et al, 2020).

Holy Thursday

April 9, 2020. Holy Thursday signifies the end of Lent. The Pope did not preside over the Chrism Mass. However, he celebrated The Mass in Coena Domini (of the Lord's Supper) at 6 pm on the Altar of the Chair in St Peter's Basilica. The liturgy commemorates the institution of the Eucharist. The traditional washing of the feet ritual was omitted. The procession of the Blessed Sacrament to the Altar of Repose was also canceled.

Good Friday

April 10, 2020. The Catholic Church celebrated the Liturgy of the Passion of Christ with the Adoration of the Cross commemorating the Lord's crucifixion and death at 6 pm in St. Peter's Basilica. The Crucifix of St. Marcellus was covered. Father Raniero Cantalamessa, The Preacher of the Papal Household conducted a meditation, then the Crucifix was revealed. Adoration followed without the traditional kissing of the Cross. At 9 pm in St Peter's Square, The Stations of the Cross or Via Crucis took place where The Cross was carried by two groups: prisoners from Padua, who wrote some of the meditations, and doctors and nurses from the Vatican Healthcare Department representing the front liners amidst pandemic. They made stops "around Bernini's colonnade and the obelisk at the center of the Square."

Black Saturday

April 11, 2020. At 9 pm, Easter Vigil begins in St. Peter's Basilica.

After the blessing of the fire behind the Altar of the Confession and the processional entrance with the lights of the Basilica instead of the lighting candles accompanied the three "Lumen Christi" invocations, the Pope presided the Liturgy of the Word and Celebrations of the Eucharist. No baptisms were performed during the liturgy. To announce the Resurrection, the bells of the Basilica rang at the moment of the "Gloria."(Vatican News, 2020).Pope Francis presided a Vigil Mass and preached a riveting message of hope to humanity in an empty St Peter's Basilica under a terrifying coronavirus outbreak where two-thirds of the world's population was under quarantine or restrictions. Pope Francis told shared his global audience the implication of the resurrection of Jesus, "tonight we acquire a fundamental right that can never be taken away from us: the right to hope."(America Magazine, 2020). A theological error and ethically hazardous that some scholars claim is the certainty of Christian hope… To say "I hope" already acknowledges that one may not get what one wants... understanding hope as a disciplined persistence (rather than an affect or conviction) enables hope to continue even when satisfaction is unforeseeable (Alimi et al, 2020).

Easter Sunday

At 11 am, the Pope celebrated Easter Sunday Mass at the Altar of the Chair in St. Peter's Basilica and proclaimed the Gospel in Greek and Latin. At the end of Mass, he went to the Sacristy to remove his vestments, before returning to the Altar of the Confession. From there, he delivered his Urbi et orbi message and give his Easter blessing(Vatican News, 2020). He ended his message by banning "indifference, self-centeredness, division and forgetfulness."(Vatican, 2020)

In celebrating Easter, people reminisce the Resurrection with masses, colorful flowers, family activities, festive dinners, and games for children. But amidst COVID-19, people celebrate it without extended family and friends. No gigantic community Easter Egg hunting. Many families created their own--"in a yard, or a living room or a studio apartment. And while egg prices skyrocketed due to coronavirus panic buying, some communities invented a paper egg hunt ritual, taping colorful paper eggs on the outside of houses for children, walking with their parents, to discover." There is still sharing of food with extended family and friends but went virtual (Imber-Black, 2020).

Sunday Masses

March 2020. Sunday Mass was held virtually in accordance with local health policies. Bishops worldwide suspended Sunday Obligation. Some dioceses canceled or prohibited priests from performing sacraments such as penance and anointing of the sick while other dioceses allowed it in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations and local health directives. Some churches were open for individual prayer(Miller et al, 2020).

March 29, 2020. In the UK, the priest of St Wulstan's Catholic Church specified in the parish bulletin that "Although there will be no public liturgies, for the time being, I shall continue to celebrate Mass for the Parish at 9.30 am on weekdays in the house and on Sundays at 10.30 am in the church". The church attendees were provided with websites of two churches that were live streaming Sunday Mass(Bryson et al, 2020).

In Poland, drive-thru confessions were conducted by a "Catholic Priest who sits in the church parking lot while wearing a mask"(Xiong et al, 2020).

In the Philippines with 81% Catholic Faithfuls, Catholic Churches had taken action to provide the public with "online-based Church masses, community prayers, spiritual recollections and retreats, and eucharistic adoration and processions"(del Castillo et al, 2020).

In New Zealand, Lyndsay Freer of the Catholic Diocese of Auckland explained;

"Because our churches are in lockdown, we are attempting to provide recorded daily Masses to our Catholic people via our diocesan website and the Bishop's Facebook…we are negotiating to have some television time during this period, and are very grateful that this is likely to be a possibility"(Oxholm et al, 2020)

In Italy, Bishop Nerbini allowed the group of Doctors attending COVID-19 patients to distribute communion, and read prayers on their bedside (Eliverä, 2020).

To creatively worship, there is a need for further research on privatization of religiosity and secularization, asynchronous religious rituals, technologically mediated religious innovation and distribution, and civil engagement(Baker et al 2020).

PASTORAL MISSION

Pastoral Theology

In Pope Francis's pastoral theology, "People come first." (America Magazine, 2021). Pastoral Theology is a practical theology that cares for the souls (National Catholic Register, 2021). The Pope is using the "Field Hospital" approach in pastoral care like a Good Samaritan (Jarzembowski, 2020). The Lord Jesus Christ presented the meaning of the love of neighbor through the story of the Good Samaritan—"enjoins listeners to care for strangers in need, even at great personal cost (Alimi, 2020)."

In the US, Pastoral care covers "missionary endeavors, counseling, formation, support groups, ecological protection, and social justice (inclusive of war, the death penalty, and the migrant and refugee crises); however, the constant refrain has been rooted in tending the wounded and an accompaniment towards renewed health" (Jarzembowski , 2020).

In South Africa, van der Merwe (2020) discussed how the church responded to poverty, they were in recession when the pandemic hit their country that aggravated their situations in extreme proportions. Poverty is defined as "deprivations" and "inequality"- "lack of basic necessities", "low levels of human dignity and social justice". The response of the church to poverty is "determined by our understanding of what the church is." In New Testament, the Greek word ecclesia is the term for church, which means "called out ones." Gelder (2004) pointed double calling as being "called and sent." Karl Barth identified this "action of God as the Missio Dei- church reaching out to the world in its suffering is not in the first place an action of the church but an attribute of the sovereign God who uses his church as an instrument in the world" (van der Merwe, 2020).

The image of Apostle Paul of the Church was a "body of Christ" made up of many "members" working together to glorify God. Giving up our racist and individualist illusions might lead us to actually

live more as if ‘we’re all in this together.’ “Hyper-cooperators”, “social animals” and “social beings” were associated by anthropologists, philosophers, and theologians to Humanity. Human persons have the capability for empathetic understanding but Its dark side is racism where we “foreclose the extension of empathetic concern to those we perceive as other”.

Augustine gave exhortations on shared vulnerability. He argued the insufficiency of appealing to the wealthy “to give generously and emphasize the need and suffering of the poor.” They must recognize the fundamental equality in vulnerability and dependence on God. Augustine highlighted “shared nakedness at birth, shared weakness at death, common sinfulness, all that might dismantle barriers to sympathetic identification.” (Alimi, 2020)

Personal and collective suffering was widespread in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Syria, and many other places due to civil war, extremism, and terrorism. Kim (2020) stated that victims of war were vulnerable to be treated unfairly. These refugee crises were hammered when the photos of a three-year-old Syrian boy named Alan Kurdi were found lifeless on a Turkish beach (The Atlantic, 2016). Pope Francis speaks of “the globalization of indifference”- Being used to the suffering of others that we comfort them with cheap theological notions or turning our eyes away(Kim, 2020).

Pastoral Methods

On June 18, 2015, accompanied by a News conference, Pope Francis released the Laudatu Si (LS) that critiques post-modern world issues: “Pollution, waste and the throwaway culture, depletion of natural resources, fresh water issues, loss of biodiversity, breakdown of human dignity and society, and global inequality”. He is calling every Christian “to take up the commitment to creation set before us by the Gospel of Jesus”(Vatican, 2015). He made clear the pastoral methods he appropriated when he stated: “Realities are more important than ideas” (LS, Nos. 110, 201). Like Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI, he utilized the See-Judge-Method for theological reflection and review of current reality or signs of the times with the purpose of “transformative social action and justice”. The method was developed by Cardinal Joseph Cardijn rooted in Aquinas’ virtue of prudence. His method was advanced and improved by Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM), liberation theologians, and North American practical theologians. Pope Francis starts by reviewing current scientific research (see), considering the principle of Judeo-Christian tradition (Judge), and progressing proposal for “dialogue and action” (Act), both on individual, collective or global level.

Science and religion in a time of COVID-19 can work together as allies. The Catholic Church affirmed the fact of evolution, Big bang theory, and the possible existence of Extraterrestrial (Barmania et al, 2020). Father Georges Lemaitre was a soldier, scientist, and Jesuit Catholic priest who was the "first to describe the expanding universe". Modern and [Post-modern] audiences would recognize this as an early version of Big Bang theory(Haynes, 2018).

Templeton Prize awardee Francis Collins adheres to the values of both science and religion. the director of the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) working all his waking hours finding a vaccine for COVID-19. He is a born-again Christian who wrote about how he transformed from atheism to Christianity.

Scholars of religion use empirical methods to assess the impact of religion in times of pandemics. Lucchetti et al (2020) used online surveys to assess 485 participants from Brazil their “socio-demographics, Religion/Spirituality measures, and social isolation characteristics and mental health consequences (hopefulness, fear, worrying and sadness)”. Religion and spirituality are helpful coping mechanisms for social isolation in the times of COVID-19, and in “reducing suffering, influencing health outcomes and minimizing the consequences of social distance.” (Lucchetti et al, 2020).

Brief RCOPE

There was a correlation between the increased use of religious activities, spiritual beliefs, and virtue of hope during the pandemic and better mental health outcomes. Pargament et al. (2000) developed Brief RCOPE and studied that religion plays a key role in searching for purpose, comfort, intimate relationship with God and others, and forgiveness, and believing in “God’s abiding presence during our difficult moments, collaboration with God in problem-solving”. Brief RCOPE is defined as “a 14-item measure of religious coping with major life stressors. It has demonstrated its utility as an instrument for research and practice in the psychology of religion and spirituality.” Del Castillo et al (2020) conducted the study on the reliability and validity of the Brief RCOPE in the Philippines. The results showed “that many Filipino Catholic youth used positive religious coping methods more frequently than negative strategies”. The positive strategies produced were from the seven subscales of the original RCOPE: “spiritual connection, seeking spiritual support, religious forgiveness, collaborative religious coping, benevolent religious reappraisal, religious purification, and religious focus”. The seven negative coping mechanisms were obtained from five subscales of the original RCOPE: “spiritual discontent, punishing God reappraisal, interpersonal religious discontent, demonic reappraisal, and reappraisal of God’s power.” The result of the study presented the “internal consistency” and “construct validity” of the Brief RCope (Del Castillo et al, 2020).

Interreligious Forms of the Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRSi)

Del Castillo et al (2020) also studied the validity of the Interreligious Forms of the Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRSi-7,CRSi-14, and CRSi-20). The results confirmed that “CRSi-7 denotes internal consistency while CRSi-14 and CRSi-20 indicate good internal consistency”. There were 514 Filipino youths who participated in the online surveys. 83.66% of the participants were Filipino Catholics while the rest were associated with other Christian denominations (10.7%) and other religions (5.64%). The CRSi has five subscales: "intellect, ideology, public practice, private practice, and religious experience." Majority of the participants were religious (51.17%), others were highly religious (45.13%), and a marginal are not religious (3.70%). The study hammered the link between religion and mental health. The high mean score on ideology (M= 4.34) (SD=0.74) among the Filipino youth by remaining "steadfast on the views of actuality and substance of a transcendent truth while navigating the unchartered waters of COVID-19". Dean et al (2020) argued that religion could offer “comfort” amidst pandemic outbreaks. Baker et al (2020) observed that COVID-19 changed the religious practice from physically present gatherings to socially distanced virtual religious rituals. This occurrence reflected in the “low mean scores of the selected Filipino youth on the CSRi-20 public practice dimension (M = 3.53. SD =0.94).” Most Filipino youths devoted themselves to personal prayer—as a positive coping strategy aligning with the high mean score on CSRi-20 private practice dimension scores (M =3.93) (SD =0.89) (Del Castillo et al, 2020).

In Poland, an online survey was conducted in April 2020 during the period of the Polish government’s strictest restrictions in response to the pandemic. The study presented that Pole who has "above average" religiosity tends to increase their faith and commitment under "uncertainty and danger." The data presented that “every fifth Pole (21.3%) devoted more time to prayer and other religious practices than they did before the restrictions…and people who had previously practiced religion regularly and also declared more religious involvement during the pandemic were more satisfied with their lives (86.8%) than other people (73.2%) “(Boguszewski , 2020).

Pastoral Care & Counseling

Catholic churches in the Philippines provided online-based masses, spiritual retreats and recollections, counseling, and pastoral guidance guiding brethren to find meaning and acceptance, refuge, hope, and rejuvenation. This initiative is inspired by the 3-fold mission of Christ as King, Prophet, and Priest. The church also provided personal protective equipment (PPE), facemasks to health workers, face shields, feeding programs to the poor, and opened the doors to the homeless (del Castillo

et al, 2020). Bishop Mesiona of Palawan “cooked and prepared food packs for front liners, prayed over police personnel, visited patients and healthcare providers in the hospital, led various relief operations and have been raising substantial funds for outreach programs and for other social action concerns”. Their church initiated a mobile market, food packs to the indigenous groups, free rides, and providing shelter to stranded local tourists (Eliverä , 2020).

The church provides spiritual assistance both to the dead and the bereaved family members…Virtual memorial services, live streaming, and online eulogies are some of the creative ways to remember the dead.” (Corpuz, 2020)

To apply the "field hospital" approach in pastoral mission, there is a need to further research on virtual qualitative methods, shifted theoretical focus on lived religion, and civic action through catholic organizations and institutions (Baker et al 2020).

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Pastoral Care & Leadership

James (2020) suggested a prophetic response maximizing the "adaptive leadership" framework in Catholic Education leadership. Catholic educators are called to be prophets, not messiahs or saviors. A prophet is "an effective or leading spokesperson of a cause” or “one gifted with more than ordinary spiritual and moral insight.” The Lord Jesus Christ lived, died, and resurrected 2000 years ago. Repeating his role is unnecessary. In fact, projecting ourselves to be a savior or expecting other leaders for a messianic performance is a form of idolatry. Parker Palmer (1998) called it “functional atheism – the belief that ultimate responsibility for everything rests with me,” - a dark side of leadership. Prophetic action means having a legitimate degree of well-being-"One must be attentive to one’s own present spiritual, mental, and emotional health in order to be in a position to help others." It also being adaptive to challenges and adversities around us.

There are five important behaviors in adaptive leadership: (a) get on the balcony by looking above at different angles to see a better perspective; (b) think politically by addressing power issues in organization and recognize the opposite views; (c) orchestrate the conflict by addressing difficult questions, bringing issues to the surface, and controlling the temperature by raising it "(drawing attention to tough questions, bringing conflicts to the surface, etc.) and lowering it (speaking to people’s anger, fear, and disorientation; slow down the process; reconnect people to their shared values, etc.); (d) give the work back by casting the vision and encouraging teamwork; and (e) hold steady by “maintaining your poise so that you can plan the next step", "focusing attention on the issue, but also allowing other issues to ripen." Issues of safety, instructional delivery, and COVID-19 flare-ups also need to address with calmness. Adaptive leadership focused “…primarily on how leaders help others do the work they need to do, in order to adapt to the challenges, they face” (Northouse, 2016, p. 258; James, 2020)

In the United States, the coronavirus outbreak that led to a temporary closure of catholic schools and economic recessions jeopardized student's ability to learn, and the affordability of the school tuition fees. Catholic schools that do not receive much support from the government (even if funded through CARES relief fund) need to address maintenance of the enrollment rate and financial sustainability. School closure led to the loss of learning, increased dropout rates, loss of free or subsidized lunches for underprivileged groups, and mental health issues (not too severe compared to developing countries).

Teaching Methods

To address loss in learning, distance learning offers opportunities but not all school networks are ready. There are risks also for underprivileged students to be left behind. Remedial education can

be applied. In transitioning to distance learning there are wide resources: Wide Open School, UNESCO, ISTE and EdSurge, Learning Keeps Going, New York Times, Distance Learning Resource Center from Education Reimagined, Top Remote Learning Solutions,Koulu, and Emerson Collective. For Catholic materials, it is available through the National Catholic Education Association, Arrupe Virtual Learning Institute, iDEAL (Innovation in Digital Education and Leader- ship) Institute at Loyola Marymount University's School of Education and Catholic schools etcetera. Internet had been used much compared to other media in developed countries while mobile phones and radio for developing countries especially in Africa.

In Africa, similar concern with the United States but more severe. School closure led to loss of learning, increased drop- out rates, loss of free or subsidized lunches for underprivileged groups, and mental health issues. They also have limited infrastructure for distance learning. The economic recession will increase higher level of "poverty and food insecurity." To scale up distance learning, resources has been provided Commonwealth of Learning, the EdTech Hub, the Global Partnership for Education, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, Mobiles for Education Alliance, UNESCO, and the Education Global Practice at the World Bank. Inter-agency Net- work for Education in Emergencies, and Global Education Cluster. 54.5% of Catholic school in Africa implemented internet-based distance learning compared to 89.8% in other developing or emerging countries. Due to internet access limitations in Africa, 45.5% used radio, 18.2% used TV, and 45.5% used mobile phone(Wodon, 2020).

To address the needs of the Catholic schools, there is a need to research further on adaptive leadership model, distance learning approaches, changes to professional roles, fund raising strategies, and government assistance on non-profit institutions (Baker et al 2020).

IV.Conclusion and Recommendations

This study represents a systematic literature review on Catholic Faith and COVID-19. Given that the pandemic had struck us for more than a year and led us to a new normal, the researcher attempted to discover how COVID-19 change the Catholic church landscape. The researcher identified an increase in articles with vigorous discussions particularly with the following themes: Epidemiology, Theodicy, Bioethics, Religious Rituals, Pastoral Mission, and Catholic Schools. The discussion presented by themes can be indicative but not exhaustive. These themes are just a starting point of a productive dialogue. The researcher is aware that heuristic and innovative approaches will emerge larger over time. There is a need for further research on religious beliefs, practices, and identities that relates to social distancing, disease mitigation behaviors, and medical behaviors; existential insecurity in relation to religiosity, applications of theodicy, and conspiracy theories about the pandemic; bioethics, ideology, and development of policies; privatization of religiosity and secularization, asynchronous religious rituals, technologically mediated religious innovation and distribution and civil engagement; virtual qualitative methods, shifted theoretical focus on lived religion, and civic action through catholic organizations and institutions; and adaptive leadership model, distance learning approaches, changes to professional roles, fundraising strategies, and government assistance on non-profit institutions.

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